

advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community and other social justice issues. In 2008, she was named one of the Forward 50 by the Jewish Daily Forward, in 2011 she was given the Community Equality Award by the Human Rights Campaign, in 2014, the City of Los Angeles honored her with the Pioneer Award during Pride Month.

A noted author and speaker, Rabbi Eger was the co-editor of *Gender and Religious Leadership: Women Rabbis, Pastors and Ministers* and the editor of the trailblazing book, *Mishkan Ga'avah: Where Pride Dwells: A Celebration of LGBTQ Jewish Life and Ritual* and has written for several news periodicals. She is a frequent commentator on television and radio on the topics of spirituality, Judaism, family and LGBTQ+ issues.

I ask all members of Congress to join me today in honoring Rabbi Denise L. Eger for 3 decades of compassionate and dynamic leadership at Congregation Kol Ami.

# RECOGNIZING AND COMMENDING THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

## HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 29, 2023*

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, as co-chair of the Congressional Bangladesh Caucus I want to recognize that 51 years ago on April 4, 1972, the United States recognized Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan.

During the nine-month-long Bangladesh Liberation War, members of the Pakistan Armed Forces and pro-Pakistani militias killed hundreds of thousands of people and injured many more. The war for independence was a struggle for democracy and freedom led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The economic situation facing Bangladesh as it emerged from the war of independence was dire. The Bengali people faced widespread poverty, chronic malnutrition of the masses, the dislocation of over 10 million people who had fled from their homes during the conflict, fragile banking and monetary system and inflation, which ran between 300 and 400 percent, and low foreign exchange resources.

The war of independence had crippled the domestic transportation system with roads, railways and bridges lying destroyed and damaged. The young country was still recovering from a severe Bhola cyclone that had hit the area in November 1970 and caused nearly half a million deaths.

Bangladesh has made enormous strides in the last five decades from one of the poorest nations to having one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, with their GDP per Capita increasing to \$2,457 in 2021 according to the World Bank which now exceeds that of its regional neighbors. Since its independence in 1971, Bangladesh's economy has grown from \$9 billion to \$450 billion, life expectancy has risen from 47 years to 73 years, and the adult literacy rate has risen to more than 75 percent. The Nation has flourished in its independence.

Bangladesh, through the leadership of current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has made substantial socioeconomic progress in food

production, disaster resilience, poverty reduction, improved health, education, and women's empowerment. Bangladesh has successfully maintained a moderate Muslim society and curbed extremism in the country, and its people have sought to maintain support for democracy and rule of law rather than descending into authoritarian rule of gun.

The United States and Bangladesh have extensive cooperation on matters of regional and global security, counter terrorism, and climate change. The U.S. is the largest export market for Bangladesh and one of the largest sources of foreign direct investment in Bangladesh. The nation of Bangladesh has contributed to the U.S. economy through bilateral trade and international security cooperation in return.

Bilateral trade between the United States and Bangladesh has increased annually with the main American exports to Bangladesh consisting of agricultural products, aircraft, machinery, engines, and iron and steel products, while American imports from Bangladesh include apparel, footwear, textile products, toys, games, sporting goods, shrimp, prawns; and agricultural products.

Further, the American people appreciate the generous and indispensable role that Bangladesh performs in accepting and sheltering more than 1 million Rohingya people from a genocide perpetrated by its neighbor, Burma. The United States has contributed the largest amount of humanitarian aid to address this crisis, totaling more than \$2 billion.

The American people welcome that Bangladesh is one of the world's largest contributors to United Nations peacekeeping efforts globally. Both countries seek to enhance their people-to-people and government-to-government relationship for shared prosperity. Bangladesh has expressed their gratitude to the United States for contributing more than 100 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to the people of Bangladesh.

The U.S.-Bangladesh relationship is strengthened by the Bangladeshi American Community and the large number of Bangladeshi students who come to the U.S. to study. More than 200,000 Bangladeshi Americans have proven themselves to be hard-working, law-abiding, and patriotic citizens of the United States, contributing positively to their communities across the country.

Today, the American people recognize and commend the Nation and people of Bangladesh as they celebrate 51 years of independence. The United States extends its sincere determination to remain a constructive partner of Bangladesh in achieving mutual economic, social, and national security objectives now and into the future.

## IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE HONORABLE JOSEPH L. RUSSELL

## HON. DORIS O. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 29, 2023*

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, as family, friends, and the community gather to celebrate the life of the Honorable Joseph "Joe" L. Russell, Retired Attorney at Law and College Professor, former Military Judge and California Administrative Law Judge, I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering this ex-

traordinary and generous businessman, community and civic leader throughout the County of Sacramento and the State of California.

Mr. Russell entered eternal rest on Monday, March 13, 2023 at the age of 80 with wife and family at his side. Today he is being celebrated at the historical landmark Shiloh Baptist Church in Sacramento, California, the Reverend Anthony R. Sadler Pastor presiding.

Born November 17, 1942, in Birmingham, Alabama to Arlee and Eva Lou Russell where he attended; was ranked high in his class and graduated from Parker High School. Joe earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science and Government at Howard University, in Washington DC. Joe earned his Jurist Doctorate Degree at Howard's School of Law. Upon graduating, he was commissioned as an officer in the United States Air Force where he was promoted to the rank of Captain prior to completing his tour of duty in the service of our country.

Joe met Ida P. Avant in 1963. They were married in 1966 while she was completing her undergraduate degree at Howard University, and he was completing his first year of law school. After concluding his tour of duty with the Air Force, the young couple relocated to Sacramento, California in 1972 to join fellow law school graduate, the late Judge Jimmy Long. They have resided in Sacramento since relocating to the City where they raised their two sons: Joseph Russell, Jr. and Michael Russell.

Joe was licensed and admitted to practice law before the following courts: United States Supreme Court, United States Court of Appeals, United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, United States District Court—Eastern District, United States District Court—Northern District, United States Military Court (Attorney and Judge); United States Military Court of Appeals, Alabama State Bar Court, and the California State Bar Court.

He has served the Sacramento Community, State of California and the United States of America as: a well-respected and beloved Military Judge, California Administrative Law Judge, Professor of law courses at California State University, Sacramento for more than 35 years, Attorney at Law, par excellence, for more than 40 years including private practice and as a Senior Deputy City Attorney/City Prosecutor for the City of Sacramento, Civil Leader, Deacon of Shiloh Baptist Church where he has been a very active member and faithful servant of the Lord for nearly 50 years. He was a devoted husband, father and grandfather, brother, uncle, mentor and friend to a multitude and with wife Ida, he was a world traveler.

A partial list of Joe's community and civic service to our community include the Sacramento Chamber of Commerce, the Sacramento Urban League, Sacramento Big Brothers and Sisters, the Brotherhood and Deacon Board of the Shiloh Baptist Church, and so many more. Many of Joe's contributions to make a safer and better place in which to live, work, recreate and worship freely are unknown to the public heretofore because he was such a humble person. Joe's passing is a great loss to the Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to stand with me today to honor the Honorable Joseph L. Russell for his life legacy and contribution to the Sacramento community.

RECOGNIZING HELENA LOCAL AND MONTANA SENATE AIDE JACKSON RACICOT FOR HIS OUTSTANDING PUBLIC SERVICE

**HON. MATTHEW M. ROSENDALE, SR.**

OF MONTANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 29, 2023*

Mr. ROSENDALE. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to recognize the work of an outstanding young man whose service in the Montana Legislature is an example of the extraordinary impact those with physical disabilities can have on their community.

Jack Racicot is an aide to the Montana Legislature and serves as a clerk for the Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee.

During the 2021 Legislative Session, Jack was on a snowboarding trip at Great Divide Ski Area near Helena where he suffered a debilitating accident that crushed his C5 vertebrae and left him paralyzed from the neck down.

After an extensive recovery at the University of Utah Medical Center, Jack returned to the Senate as an aide in the 68th Legislative Session and continues to serve with distinction to this day. Jack's courageous return to work is a poignant reminder of the strength of Montana's young men and women.

I'm humbled to see such a dedicated young man serving his state despite his injuries, and I am proud to recognize him in the United States House of Representatives.

RECOGNIZING THE DESIGNATION OF GAINESVILLE'S NEW VA CLINICS

**HON. KAT CAMMACK**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 29, 2023*

Mrs. CAMMACK. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Florida's Third Congressional District, I'm proud to recognize the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System for its service on behalf of our nation's veterans through the dedication of the Gainesville Veteran Affairs Mental Health Facility, which began providing care to veterans in 2022.

The clinic, located in Gainesville, Florida, is a state-of-the-art, 39,932 square-foot facility that offers mental health intensive care management, a psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery center, a substance abuse clinic, a compensated work therapy clinic, a post-traumatic stress disorder clinic, community care, and suicide prevention services. The construction of this facility began in 2017 when it was approved by the U.S. Congress as part of the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017.

Our men and women in uniform make the ultimate sacrifice while fighting to protect our nation, and it is our duty as Americans to ensure that they have exceptional health care following their service to the Stars and Stripes.

The North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System has demonstrated a deep commitment to the needs of veterans and their families by constantly striving to expand and improve the quality of care available to our nation's heroes. The dedication of the Gaines-

ville Veteran Affairs Primary Care Facility, since its opening in 2022, has played a vital role in ensuring that our veterans in Florida's Third Congressional District are provided for through the accessibility of experienced health care providers and critical mental health resources.

I'd like to extend a special thank you to the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System for all it has done to serve our community in Florida's Third Congressional District, and I'm excited to see how the Gainesville VA Mental Health Facility will continue to provide for our veterans.

RECOGNIZING THE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CONSORTIUM 35TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

**HON. ADAM SMITH**

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 29, 2023*

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the Housing Development Consortium for their 35 years of service and affordable housing advocacy within King County.

The Housing Development Consortium (HDC) is a nonprofit organization in King County that has supported countless housing organizations, businesses, and government organizations to meet the housing needs of people with diverse incomes. HDC is a nationally recognized leader in affordable housing advocacy, and their commitment to the Puget Sound region has made tremendous impacts. From fighting for increased funding for new low-income housing to maximizing opportunities for those living on a limited income, HDC continues to play an important role in affordable housing advocacy. Further, HDC pursues these goals through a lens of sustainability to reduce emissions and energy costs for residents. Their work makes our community a safer, better place for all who reside throughout the Puget Sound region.

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply grateful for the Housing Development Consortium and their critical work, and I look forward to continuing to work with them to ensure that the residents of King County have access to safe and affordable housing.

CONGRESSIONAL PROCLAMATION FOR MISSISSIPPI TORNADO RECOVERY

**HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON**

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 29, 2023*

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart as the people of the Mississippi Delta recover from the violent tornadoes that ripped through the 2nd Congressional District last Friday night.

Whereas, the communities in Rolling Fork, Silver City, and Winona were devastated by violent tornadoes on Friday, March 24, 2023; and

Whereas, the Mississippi Delta region is one of the most disadvantaged regions in the United States; and

Whereas, we mourn those who lost their lives, and I am praying for their loved ones in this difficult time; and

Whereas, President Joseph R. Biden, Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas, and Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) Administrator Deanne Criswell acted swiftly to initiate a federal response for the disaster relief effort in Mississippi; and

Whereas, the state of Mississippi has neglected to expand Medicaid through the Affordable Care Act, costing Mississippi over \$14 billion that could have helped communities recover across the 2nd Congressional District; and now, therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the United States Congress sends its thoughts and prayers to the people of Mississippi as they pick up the pieces and emerge stronger than ever.

HONORING MAYOR ROBERT "BOB" BLAIS FOR HIS 52 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE VILLAGE OF LAKE GEORGE

**HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 29, 2023*

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Robert "Bob" Blais on an incredible 52-year career as the Mayor of the Village of Lake George. He is currently the country's longest serving mayor and his extraordinary tenure stands as proof of his exceptional stewardship of the Lake George community. While he is retiring at the end of this term, the echoes of his remarkable impact will carry on for decades.

Mayor Blais has devoted the entirety of his adult life to improving and revitalizing the Village of Lake George. He was first elected a village trustee in 1968 but was also a staple in the community for many years prior, serving as a volunteer firefighter, a police officer, and even a dog warden. Just three years after his election to the town board, Blais then mounted a campaign for mayor. He took his first oath of office in June of 1971 and spent the next half century guiding the village toward a brighter future. From strengthening the infrastructure, to preserving Lake George's natural ecosystem, and bolstering the local tourism industry, the outsized effect of Mayor Blais can be seen throughout the village.

From his earliest years in office, Mayor Blais has worked tirelessly to transform the Village of Lake George into a world-renowned tourism destination known for its family friendly atmosphere and widespread appeal. He has been a patient steward of his community's success, a consummate public servant, always willing to set aside his own ego in favor of the village's best interests. Known for responding to every letter and making time for every concern, Mayor Blais put his constituents first, which is a model that all aspiring public servants should aim to follow.

No individual can claim a greater degree of personal responsibility for the village's revitalization and enduring success than Mayor Robert "Bob" Blais. He has dedicated nearly six decades to guiding his local community, and on behalf of New York's 21st Congressional District, I am honored to recognize his exceptional leadership and celebrate his remarkable career.